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ABSTRACT

The first section of the update lists responses received to date to a survey of teacher portfolio use. Fourteen preservice and inservice teacher education programs and 12 kindergarten through grade 12 school districts responded with brief descriptions of their portfolio use and with contacts and addresses for further information. The second section is an annotated bibliography of four studies on teacher portfolios published since November 1991. A final section reviews the state of the art in teacher portfolios. Several teacher education programs that responded appear to use portfolios as a means of increasing teacher reflection and providing a record of teacher growth to be discussed and shared with other teachers. The remainder appear to be using teacher-constructed portfolios to increase the quality and specificity of the assessment process. Some schools districts are using teacher portfolios as a way for teachers to demonstrate professional growth. A few are using or considering portfolios as part of the teacher certification system. This path seems premature, based on the experience with teacher portfolios so far. The promise of portfolios remains bright, but remaining concerns must be addressed before the relationship between the portfolio and its content and scoring can be reliably defined. (SLD)

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ED 361 357

TEACHING PORTFOLIOS: 1992 UPDATE ON RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

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1992 UPDATE ON TEACHER PORTFOLIOS

Introduction

This report continues the work begun in 1991 at Far West Laboratory which identified the increased interest in using teacher portfolios to improve the quality of instruction in American schools. The 1991 synthesis of research and annotated bibliography addressed some fundamental questions of definition, purpose, content, and mode of evaluation for teacher prepared portfolios. It identified some early research and implementation efforts at the pre-service and in-service levels. Subsequent to this document, Far West Laboratory initiated a Teacher Portfolio Network and invited a wide array of individuals to join the network and to nominate others interested in research and implementation in this area. The Network currently includes over 117 members from across the United States and Europe. These individuals were queried about the status and scope of their use of teacher portfolios in pre-service teacher education programs and in-service programs of teacher improvement and/or teacher assessment. The first section of this 1992 Update gives a listing of the responses to date from the field regarding the "state of the art" in teacher portfolio use. While this list clearly is not complete, it does provide a picture of the progress made to date and, when analyzed, reveals some persistent concerns and problems that threaten to diminish the impact of this new assessment practice. This response from the field will be circulated to the members of the Network, both to assist their development through enhanced dialogue and to generate comment and debate about the uses and abuses of teacher portfolios. A wide circulation should also generate more members for the Network and more information about current practices.

The second section of this 1992 Update is an annotated bibliography of research presented or published on the topic of teacher portfolios since November of 1991. Again, this list of four research presentations is not exhaustive but it does provide a sense of the research community's interest in teacher portfolios. It is likely that other research efforts are underway but have not yet been presented or published. The review of the papers presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association revealed only a few that dealt with teacher portfolios although a large number of presentations were made about student portfolios and other forms of "alternative" assessment.

A scan of the efforts to revitalize teacher education programs in the past five years, presented at the 1992 Conference of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education revealed that one third of the teacher education program had made no progress at all toward using teacher portfolios in pre-service credential programs despite an awareness of their considerable potential for altering the manner in which both programs and students are assessed. This same conference had only one session devoted to the topic of teacher portfolios.

The third and final section of this report identifies and discusses some of the persistent problems and concerns that have not been properly addressed in this past year. While the 1991 report discussed the definitions of the teacher portfolio, the purposes of a teacher portfolio, the probable content of one, and the evaluation of the portfolio, many of the issues embedded in the presentation still remain unresolved and, by virtue of the increasing interest in teaching portfolios and the prevalence of such notions in the popular education reform literature, grow more pressing. Moreover, there are significant background issues regarding the fundamental framework for discussing teacher knowledge and competence that must be resolved before the technical concerns about teacher portfolios can be addressed. The conceptual and policy implications of these concerns are discussed and a call for additional research is made. The role of Far West Laboratory in addressing these issues is discussed and priorities for the coming year are delineated.

TEACHING PORTFOLIO UPDATE - RESPONSES FROM THE FIELD

As a result of the initial national mailings regarding the establishment of a teacher portfolio network, a number of colleges and universities and school districts responded with brief sketches of the work they are doing or planning in the area of teacher portfolios. What follows is a listing of those responses so that interested parties can begin an enhanced dialogue about this topic.

A. PRE-SERVICE & IN-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

1. Institution: Lewis and Clark College

Contact: Dr. Nancy Nagel

Program/Activity: She is working with in-service teachers in science/math/technology where teachers develop portfolios to document growth and activities and to submit for licensure purposes. Her recent manuscript is annotated in this update.

Address: 0615 SW Palatine Hill Road
Portland OR 97219
503-768-7760

2. Institution: University of Southern Maine

Contact: Dr. Walter H. Kimball

Program/Activity: He teaches a portfolio development course for students in undergraduate minor in educational studies. The portfolio is used for application to the graduate level internship year and is used for student reflection and documentation of experiences.

Address: 221 Bailey Hall
Gorham Maine 04038
207-780-5082

3. Institution: University of Northern Colorado

Contact: Dr. Douglas MacIsaac

Program/Activity: The College of Education uses portfolios in both undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs to serve reflective purposes and as a tool for teachers to demonstrate and synthesize growing knowledge and understanding of teaching.

Address: McKee Hall
Greeley, CO 80639
303-351-2546

4. Institution: Stanford University

Contact: Dr. Grace E. Grant

Program/Activity: This program uses portfolios to structure its practicum course around reflective practice and professional collaboration. Students comment on each other's portfolios and present select instructional activities drawn from the portfolios at an end-of-year conference. Such use appears to boost teacher confidence, document growth in knowledge of teaching, and integrate the professional curriculum.

5. Institution: Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Contact: Dr. Pinchas Tamir

Program/Activity: Biology student teachers create a portfolio consisting of a videotape of an inquiry lesson, a written analysis of a research paper in science education, a written report of aresearch study conducted by the student, a lesson plan of an inquiry oriented lab session, and an open book, two hour written examination.

Address: School of Education
Hebrew University
Jerusalem, Israel 91905
972-2-666804

6. Institution: Northern Kentucky University

Contact: Dr. David M. Bishop

Program/Activity: Undergraduate students are doing portfolios on literacy in reading and for the writing methods courses. The department is moving toward teaching portfolios in general.

Address: Education Department
276 BEP
Highland Heights, KY 41099-0800
606-572-5624

7. Institution: University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Contact: Dr. Marilyn Oldhausen

Program/Activity Graduate students construct portfolios for self-assessment and course grading in literacy education courses. She is conducting research to determine the impact of portfolio construction on teacher knowledge, teacher beliefs about assessment, classroom assessment practices, and changes in personal habits related to literacy.

Address: College of Education
4505 Maryland Parkway
Las Vegas, NV 89154
702-597-4068

8. Institution: Fordham University

Contact: Dr. Denise Stavis Levine

Program/Activity: She has been studying teacher portfolios and completed a dissertation, *A Case Study of Teacher Writing for Professional Purposes.* She uses portfolios in courses she teaches for reflection, staff development, and evaluation.

Address: NYC Laboratory School
1700 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10128
212-427-2798

9. Institution: North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching

Contact: Dr. Anthony G. Rud, Jr.

Program/Activity: He will be working with the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill on a redesign of the teacher education program using portfolios in a manner similar to Shulman's recommendations.

Address: Cullowhee, NC 28723-9062
704-293-5202

10. Institution: Multnomah Education Service District

Contact: Dr. F. Leon Paulson

Program/Activity: He teaches courses using portfolios to document student learning in the course and teaches about portfolios in courses offered for Portland State University. The "composite" portfolio, to use Paulson's term, includes stating an overall rationale, setting standards, selecting contents, and evaluating the results (using a format entitled "a metacognitive letter." An article about this composite portfolio is in Educational Leadership, May, 1992.

Address: PO Box 301039
Portland, OR 97230-9039
503-255-1841

11. Institution Kamehameha Schools

Contact: Dr. Ramona K. Hao

Program/Activity: She is going to use portfolios developed during student teaching as one aspect of evaluating a pre-service teacher education program.

Address: Kapalama Heights
Honolulu, HI 96817
808-832-3000

12. Institution: Adelphi University

Contact: Dr. Giselle Martin-Kniep

Program/Activity: She has been working with in-service teachers who create portfolios to document staff development outcomes. She is also interested in working with teachers to help them develop student portfolios in a variety of subject areas.

Address: School of Education
Garden City, NY 11530
516-671-7264

13. Institution: California State University, Chico

Contact: Dr. Michael Kotar

Program/Activity: His program requires elementary credential candidates to construct a portfolio focused on documenting how candidates have met the state's ten required teacher competencies.

Address: Department of Education
Chico, CA 95929-0222
916-898-5184

14. Institution: University of the Pacific

Contact: Dr. Marilyn Draheim

Program/Activity: Her program requires all credential candidates to construct a portfolio focused on documenting how the candidates have met the state's ten required teacher competencies.

Address: 3601 Pacific Avenue
Stockton, CA 95211
209-946-2336

B. K-12 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

1. Institution: Poway Unified School District, CA

Contact: Mr. Don Raczka, Program Director
Poway Professional Assistance Program

Program/Activity: Poway has created an alternative model for experienced teacher (5 yrs+) evaluation that includes portfolios based on teacher selected goals for the year. the portfolio is described as a "photo album" and may include a log of activities, student work, examples of assignments or curriculum, photographs, videotapes or student evaluations.

Address: 14640 Tierra Bonita Blvd.
Poway, CA 92064
619-748-0010

2. Institution Educational Testing Service

Contact: Dr. Roberta Camp, Development Specialist

Program/Activity: She has been involved with portfolio use in the Pittsburgh public schools where supervisors use student portfolios as a basis for discussing classroom practice with teachers.

Address: Educational Testing Service 11-R
Princeton, NJ 08541
609-734-1090

3. Institution Urban Gateways

Contact: Dr. Jerome J. Hausman, Director
Center for Arts Curriculum
Planning and Evaluation

Program/Activity: This organization will be working with the Illinois Alliance for Essential Schools to explore approaches to portfolio evaluation.

4. Institution: Texas Education Agency
Division of Teacher Assessment

Contact: Dr. Nolan E. Wood, Director

Program/Activity: This state agency is exploring the use of portfolios in the Texas Master Teacher Examination which is required for movement on their career ladder. There is some talk of making a portfolio part of pre-service certification testing.

Address: 1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701

5. Institution: The Rand Corporation
El Rancho Unified School District

Contact: Dr. Tor Ormseth, Research Assistant

Program/Activity: They are starting an NSF project on math/science curricula that will involve teacher portfolios (among other data collection devices) to validate questionnaire responses.

Address: PO Box 2138
Santa Monica, CA 90407
213-393-4818

6. Institution: Germantown Friends School

Contact: Dr. Joan Countryman
Assistant Head for Academic Planning

Program/Activity: She teaches math methods to graduate students at University of Pennsylvania and is interested in using portfolios as a part of that course. She is also interested in using portfolios as a part of a new teacher evaluation project at Germantown Friends School.

Address: 31 West Coulter Street
Philadelphia, PA 19144
215-951-2697

7. Institution: Amphitheater Public Schools

Contact: Dr. Betty Craig, Outcomes Specialist
Career Ladder Program

Program/Activity: They use portfolios in their evaluation system for assessing and compensating teachers in the Career Ladder Program and have two years of data and experience with it.

Address: 701 West Wetmore
Tucson, AZ 85705
602-742-8002

8. Institution Saddleback Valley Unified School District
Serrano Intermediate School

Contact: Dr. Barbara F. Smith, Principal

Program/Activity: The principal offered the teachers an option of doing portfolios in lieu of the standard observation-based assessment process. 57% chose the portfolio option which focused on samples of student work (minimum was 8 representative samples) with an accompanying log that gave the assignment, curriculum focus, expected outcomes, and teacher comments.

Address: 24642 Jeronimo Road
El Toro, CA 92630
714-586-3221

9. Institution: Crestview Elementary School, CA

Contact: Mr. Daniel Calahan, Principal

Program/Activity: A volunteer group of teachers is keeping portfolios for professional growth documentation but is experimentally linked to an alternative evaluation plan. Participation is voluntary. He is keeping an administrator's portfolio for personal growth and support for the concept.

Address: Utah Avenue
VAFB (Vandenburg Air Force Base) CA 93437
805-734-2896

10. Institution: Osceola District Schools, FL

Contact: Kenneth Myers, Principal
Reedy Creek Elementary School

Program/Activity: This district has begun implementing a new teacher evaluation program that involves teaching portfolios as one option for experienced teachers to show evidence of annual goal completion.

Address: Reedy Creek Elementary School
2300 Brook Court
Kissimmee, FL 34758
407-933-4774

District Office Attn: Cindy Williams
827 Osceola Blvd
Kissimmee, FL 34744

11. Institution: Maine Department of Educational and Cultural Services

Contact: Commissioner of Education

Program/Activity: All administrators are required to prepare a portfolio related to 13 knowledge areas defined by the state board of education as crucial for school administrators.as part of the evidence needed for re-certification. The outcomes of the portfolio assessment which includes self and peer evaluation form the professional development plan for the individual.

Address. Education Building
State House, Station 101
Augusta, ME 04333
207-289-3501

12. Institution: Southwest Regional Schools

Contact: Ms. Janelle Cowan

Program/Activity: This Alaska district has adopted a program of teacher portfolios for the improvement of instruction. Their portfolio begins with a narrative on teacher goals for the year, based on school adopted objectives, checklists completed four times per year by the site administrator that cover lesson plans, room organization, student participation, instruction, classroom control, and recording of student progress, and four videotaped lesson presentation that are rated on various aspects of the clinical supervision teaching model.

The district has also adopted what they are calling a portfolio for substitute teachers which includes a persuasive letter and a vita. The letter is graded on neatness, staying on the subject, imagination, sentences, mechanics, and ideas.

Address: Box 90
Dillingham, Alaska 99576-1989

1992 UPDATE OF ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON TEACHER PORTFOLIOS

This section provides a review of articles and papers presented on the topic of teacher portfolios since the the first Far West Laboratory publication on teacher portfolios, released in November of 1991. An ERIC search was conducted in October, 1992 and papers were requested from the 1992 AACTE and AERA conferences. The original members of the Teacher Portfolio Network were asked to submit papers presented elsewhere and works in progress for inclusion in this updated annotated bibliography. This list is, obviously, still not an exhaustive review of the literature on teacher portfolios but should provide a useful addition to the 1991 effort.

Levine, D.S. (1990). A case study of teachers writing for professional purposes. (Doctoral dissertation, Fordham University). Dissertation Abstracts International, 51/11-A, 3706.

This case study dissertation analyzed the portfolios of two teachers and found that writing for the purpose of accountability produced "dummy runs," devoid of evaluation, reflection, connection or speculation. In addition, teachers worried often about time fragmentation, the press of curricular coverage, and larger political issues impacting education. The author calls for formal training for teachers in reflective writing and the creation of time during the work day for teacher writing, sharing, and discussing of mutual concerns. Teachers must engage in discussion of their portfolios with other teachers if the portfolios are to be truly useful.

Lichtenstein, G., Rubin, T., and Grant, G. (1992) Teacher portfolios and professional development. A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

This paper discusses the outcomes of the first year that graduate level teacher education students were required to compile a portfolio as a part of a year-long practicum course. The purpose of the portfolio was to create Schon's (1987) notion of the reflective practicum which would create a link between theory and practice. They view portfolios as tool to coach novitiates in their acquisition of a language of practice. STEP portfolios are not representations of

students best work and they were not graded by program faculty. Students were required to generate a question that arose from current classroom practice, that engaged or troubled them, and that was a new question without an obvious answer. These were shared with other students and faculty and generated much discussion. Students then collected artifacts from classroom activities that pertained to their question. These were identified and annotated as to its relevance to the question being entertained. Finally, a reflective essay pulled the question and the artifacts together. At every point, drafts were submitted and commented on by faculty and shared with students in small working groups.

It is the process of developing sophisticated thinking about complex practical situations that characterizes the professionalization process. Full development of the portfolio process as a means to reflection on teaching requires careful coaching and modeling to be effective. A year-long practicum was necessary to obtain the type of depth of analysis achieved by some students. Portfolios enable students to integrate other facets of the curriculum in a coherent way. It does provide a portable, permanent simulacrum of the student's teaching.

Problems include: 1) the evaluation of reflective portfolios remains problematic; 2) coaching students through a reflective portfolio is enormously time intensive; 3) portfolio work is still not fully integrated with the rest of the curriculum (some of which is highly regulated by the state legislature in California); 4) students learn skills that are not supported or valued in many school districts.

Nagel, N.G. & Engel, J.B. (1992) Pre-service teacher portfolios and professional licensure: A formative report. A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

This paper presents the findings of a study done on the effects of Oregon's 1988 changes to teacher certification law that now requires all candidates for initial certification to prepare "work samples" that are evaluated by the teacher education program faculty and the cooperating teacher in addition to completing the typical required courses and field experiences. The "work sample" is a set of related lesson plans of 2 - 5 weeks duration which include not only goals and instructional activities, but also details baseline information on student knowledge prior to instruction, data on learning gains by

students as a result of planned instruction, candidate interpretation of the presence or absence of student learning gains, and descriptions of how future instruction will change as a result of this analysis. The lessons selected for the "work sample" are also observed by the university faculty member and the cooperating teacher. The candidate must also achieve a satisfactory rating on this formally observed teaching in order to be recommended for licensure.

The principal impact of this reform on teacher education curricula in Oregon has been to reveal the lack of training in assessment, particularly performance assessments and other alternative forms of assessment, as the focus of licensure is now on achieving student gains. Knowledge of pre and post instructional assessment was deemed lacking in most Oregon teacher education programs. In 1990, special workshops were held around the state for teacher educators and cooperating teachers who work with them to address this problem.

Although the emphasis on student learning gains as the principal measure of teacher competence is not fully supported by research and there is persistent concern about the amount of work involved in preparing these "work samples" during student teaching, there appears to be general agreement that this reform has produced a shift in curricular focus in teacher education and an enhanced interest in new forms of assessment for teachers to use with their students and for teacher educators to use with their candidates. The paper calls for continued research on the development of these new teachers as they enter the work force.

Shulman, L.(1992) Portfolios for teacher educators: A component of reflective teacher education. A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

This paper, part of a symposium presented by the Stanford University Teacher Education Program's utilization of portfolios during a graduate level pre-service teacher education program, focuses on the how the teaching portfolio, defined by Shulman as "the structured documentary history of a set of coached or mentored accomplishments substantiated by samples of student portfolios and fully realized - not when it sits in a box - but fully realized only through reflective writing, deliberation, and serious conversation," is

used in one of the classes he teaches in the program and also how the concept of portfolios as a means of retaining the teaching experience long enough to seriously reflect on it is used by the graduate students in "STEP" and by two faculty members who teach in the program.

Shulman's portfolio contains a student written case of a lesson or set of lessons that went awry, a write up of a reciprocal observation of the student by another student, which includes interviews with the children taught by the student teacher and the observational efforts on a colleague of the first student. Finally, the portfolio contains a reflective essay about the whole process.

Shulman also makes some general observations about portfolio usage in teacher education. 1), portfolios permit analysis and reflection on teaching and learning beyond one lesson or one period; 2), portfolios must contain student work - both good and bad - to be content and context specific and to unpack the complexity of teaching; 3), portfolios institutionalize norms in collaboration and coaching because they generate extensive, detailed conversations about teaching. He notes that having groups of teachers work on portfolios is crucial to their success as it requires cross-talk and promotes a form of reflection that few can obtain alone. He points out that if teacher educators did portfolios of their own classes that included the portfolios done by teacher education students, the profession might achieve the curricular coherence we lack.

1992 ANALYSIS OF THE STATUS OF TEACHER PORTFOLIOS

Introduction

This section of the report seeks to capture the "state of the art" in teacher portfolios and to analyze the field to determine what research and policy issues require additional investigation and resolution. It is based on the field responses received to date and the updating of the research literature completed for this report. In general, the thrust of this section is to alert the field to the dilemma that faces the wide spread use of teacher portfolios in pre-service and in-service programs.

Although the roots of this interest in portfolio development lie in the efforts of educational reformers to improve the method of assessing student learning, the values espoused by those who champion the use of "alternative" or "authentic" assessments for students have made a case that has clear implications for assessing the abilities of teachers, both at the point of entry into the profession and during their career. If these new forms of assessment provide a greater opportunity for students to learn higher order thinking, develop the habits of mind that lead to life-long learning skills, and support contextual and individual differences, it is logical to believe that "alternative" forms of assessment for teachers would increase our chances of achieving the high and rigorous standards for teaching espoused in the current education reform literature. This parallelism about the usefulness of portfolios in capturing new information about competence extends to similar concerns about the invidious impact of increased certification standards on minority teachers that utilize standardized test instruments and the persistent complaints that most teacher assessment systems promote cost-effectiveness and traditional notions of reliability and validity over authenticity and sensitivity to content and context differences. By identifying means of assessment that are sensitive to cultural and linguistic differences and that provide rich, detailed information about the actual setting in which the teacher works, these new forms of teacher assessment can address the legitimate concerns of policymakers while remaining fair and equitable towards individual teachers. This hopeful message is countered by the application of teacher constructed portfolios for very different purposes in pre-service and in-service teacher education programs.

Juxtaposition of Purpose

It is clear that there is a continuum of uses for teacher portfolios in the programs scanned for this report. Indeed, there is a juxtaposition evident in the programs that have identified teacher constructed portfolios as a means of advancing the pace of teacher development and increasing the level of teacher professionalism as compared to those programs that have adopted teacher constructed portfolios as a means of improving teacher assessment for licensure and employment decisions.

Several of the teacher education programs, Stanford University, University of Northern Colorado, and Adelphi, appear to use the portfolio concept as a means of increasing teacher reflection and providing a record of teacher growth that can be discussed and shared with other teachers. These are all pre-service teacher education programs and none make formal use of the portfolio for assessment purposes. An undergirding theme is providing a vehicle for helping beginning teachers gain a clearer understanding of their developing skills as teachers. The container of artifacts that is the portfolio is merely a means to an end. The end is the reflective consideration of the choices made and the outcomes achieved by the teacher. Such internal dialogues by the beginning teacher are challenged and enhanced by conversations among beginning teachers who share their portfolios as they construct them. These external dialogues provide content and context specific analysis and synthesis about the complex world of teaching and appear to reinforce the notion that teaching is highly professional work that involves managing many variables within a fluid social dynamic.

The remainder of the pre-service teacher education programs who responded to the Network's call for information, and the numerical majority, appear to be using teacher constructed portfolios to increase the quality and specificity of their assessment process. In the case of Lewis and Clark College, the state of Oregon has mandated such a process, leaving the institution no choice in the matter. The other institutions have identified portfolios as a preferred means of gathering data on candidate competence along with the more traditional assessment tools like observation checklists. These programs appear to have responded to the complaints about the low quality of teacher assessment practices noted in the education reform literature as well as the growing realization that the process-

product research findings of the previous decade are no longer sufficient to analyze teaching.

The evidence from the K-12 districts and state agencies was mixed. A number of the school districts that are experimenting with teacher portfolios are using them as an alternative means for experienced, tenured teachers to demonstrate continued professional growth or to demonstrate that they have met annual instructional goals required by the district or the state. The evidence suggests that experienced teacher prefer portfolios to the more restrictive forms of teacher assessment and find the process of developing them helpful to their own professional growth, quite apart from any benefits to the school or the district. Texas and Arizona require the submission of teacher portfolios for their respective programs for Master Teachers or Career Ladder Program. Oregon is only state which is requiring teacher portfolios as a part of their certification system although Texas reported that it is considering this possibility.

The evidence to date suggests that both pre-service teacher education programs and school district and state agency assessment programs feel that the current orientation toward observational checklists is insufficient to meet the demands for competent teachers for contemporary classrooms. Most of the current observational systems are heavily focused on generic pedagogy and classroom management in particular. What is needed is a means of accommodating instructional differences generated by subject matter differences, grade level differences, and, most importantly, differences in the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students. While portfolios appear to have much promise in providing high quality information about a particular teacher's classroom instructional decisions, there is an over-arching problem that precludes the smooth and rapid adoption of portfolios for "high stakes" assessment purposes.

A Framework for Teaching

One of the clear findings of the California New Teacher Project (1992), which was the largest and most extensive investigation to date of the issues surrounding the support and induction of new teachers into the profession, was that teaching still does not possess a commonly accepted framework for describing what a beginning teacher should know and be able to do. Similar to the dilemma that faced the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which

is currently engaged in an effort to define accomplished teaching across subject areas and grade levels as a part of its development of national voluntary teacher assessment, the California investigators found that teacher assessment as it is practiced in pre-service teacher education programs and in district employment assessment practices is plagued by a lack of common definitions and common expectations for beginning teachers. Some teacher education programs in the study, for example, had as few as fifteen separate competencies for candidates to meet while others had as many as sixty-five different competencies in their summative teacher evaluation forms. This lack of a common framework for discussing teaching and its improvement resulted in divergent assessment of teaching not only across programs and districts, but also for individual candidates as they progressed through the preparation and induction process. Recent graduates of California teacher education programs reported significant confusion and uncertainty during student teaching as the university supervisor and cooperating teacher often disagreed about their performance and noted an inability to make much use of the assessments they did receive to identify areas of teaching improvement.

While California may not be the bellwether state it once was in educational innovation, these findings are all too typical of the current state of teacher assessment. The absence of standards at the state, regional, or national level make it difficult to promote increasing the rigor of certification, create confusion and uncertainty in the minds of teachers about what is professional level performance, and contributes to the persistent belief that anyone with a college education and an interest in children or youth can teach. Indeed, some of the most vociferous critics of teacher education are the graduates of those programs. Because they have been given conflicting advice about teaching and have been evaluated by instruments and practices not based on a clear understanding of expected knowledge and skill, many beginning teachers enter the profession without knowing what they know and what they still need to know.

In light of this issue, moving toward the use of teacher portfolios as a means of assessing teachers for certification or employment seems premature and fraught with danger. Unless the states that have adopted such measures or are planning to do so have clear understandings of what can be expected of a teacher in the initial years of teaching, regardless of the type or size of district, its

financial support, its curricular organization, its new teacher support program, and other contextual variables, the scoring of such portfolios, particularly identifying the cut-off score for earning the certification will be extremely difficult and open to legal challenge.

Call for Research and Policy Studies

The emerging field of teacher portfolios requires substantial research in the coming years to investigate the issues surrounding the relationship between the actual purpose of the portfolio and its content and scoring. Research is needed to determine how portfolios constructed by experienced teachers differ in content and level of effort required from those constructed by student or beginning teachers. Given the desire to increase the number of under-represented teachers in the work force, research is needed to ensure that the use of portfolios really does permit these candidates to show what they know and can do.

Moreover, the rapid increase of portfolio usage in the classrooms as a means of "alternative" assessment of student work raises policy questions about the adequacy of current teacher preparation programs to provide beginning teachers capable of using student portfolios as a regular means of assessing their students' work. Finally, the complex matter of deciding what the minimum level of teacher knowledge and skill will be for certification purposes will require a wide-ranging debate and at the national level.

The promise of portfolios remains bright in spite of these powerful concerns. The evidence of the ability of a portfolio to unpack the complexity of teaching and to provide the constructor of the portfolio a means of capturing the ephemeral nature of instruction suggests that the benefits outweigh the methodological and policy concerns. What is required is vigorous action on a combined front to attack the remaining concerns. It is the intent of the Teacher Portfolio Network to serve as conduit for such action and to promote research and dissemination to enhance the impact of teacher portfolios on the improvement of education.